

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 5997

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PROG, MARR, UNSC, LE, IS, XF
SUBJECT: WEIZMAN ON SOUTHERN LEBANON - 8 MAY MEETING

REF: TEL AVIV 5943

1. TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE APPROACHING 30TH ANNIVERSARY
OF ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE, MINISTER OF DEFENSE WEIZMAN
CALLED A MEETING OF ALL MILITARY ATTACHES STATIONED IN ISRAEL.
WEIZMAN LED OFF WITH A SHORT RESUME' OF THE EVENTS
OF THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS (THE LAST TIME HE HAD SEEN
THE ATTACHE CORPS) AND PLACED A GREAT DEAL OF EMPHASIS
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UPON THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.

2. HE EXPRESSED GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH THE
WAY UNIFIL IS PERFORMING ITS MISSION. HE EMPHASIZED
THAT THE IDF AT THIS TIME HAD NO EVIDENCE OF LARGE
SCALE INFILTRATION OF ARMED PALESTINIANS BACK INTO
SOUTHERN LEBANON, WHICH "GIVES US HOPE". HE SAID

THAT CHIEF OF STAFF EITAN AND SIILASVUO WOULD BE MEETING EITHER AT THE END OF THIS WEEK OR AT THE BEGINNING OF NEXT TO DISUCSS "FURTHER RE-DEPLOYMENT" OF ISRAELI FORCES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. HE INDICATED HE HOPED THAT THIS MEETING WOULD RESULT IN A "JOINT ASSESSMENT" OF THE TOTAL SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON BY THE IDF AND UNIFIL (A PROCEDURE NOT YET PROPOSED OR ESTABLISHED) FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON INFILTRATION ATTEMPTS AND UNIFIL REACTIONS.

3. WEIZMAN THEN RESTATED THAT ALL ISRAEL WANTS IS A PEACEFUL NORTHERN BORDER, BUT FURTHER QUALIFIED THIS BY REFERRING TO "AN OPEN BORDER SIMILAR TO THAT WITH JORDAN". HE SAID IT WAS HIS HOPE THAT EVENTUALLY THE IDF FORCES WOULD "WITHDRAW TO THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY" BUT THE PROTECTION OF LEBANESE VILLAGERS IN THE AREA MUST BE ASSURED. HE RETURNED TO HIS PREVIOUS REMARK AND SAID, "THE GOOD FENCE MUST BECOME A GOOD BORDER - NOT JUST A FENCE WITH A COUPLE OF OPENINGS POKED THROUGH".

4. AFTER REVIEWING THE HISTORY OF THE SITUATION IN THE AREA AND PROCLAIMING THAT THE IDF ACTION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON HAD BEEN A SUCCESS, WEIZMAN CONCLUDED THIS PORTION OF HIS BRIEFING BY SAYING "WHAT WE WANT IS A SOUTHERN LEBANON FREE OF HOSTILE FORCE - IF
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THIS IS NOT THE RESULT (OF UNIFIL'S PRESENCE) WE WILL SHOW THE WORLD THAT GOD HELPS THEM WHO HELP THEMSELVES".

5. COMMENT: WEIZMAN WAS WELL AWARE THAT THE AUDIENCE HE WAS ADDRESSING WOULD SOON BE REPORTING ALMOST VERBATM THE WORDS THAT HE SPOKE ON THIS AND OTHER SUBJECTS. THEREFORE, HIS REMARKS WERE VEILED AND NOT VERY SPECIFIC. AT ONE POINT HE DID SAY THAT NO FIRM DATE FOR ULTIMATE WITHDRAWAL HAD BEEN SET, BUT THAT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO SET ONE AT SOME TIME. HIS VERY CAREFUL REFERRAL TO "FURTHER RE-DEPLOYMENT", "JOINT ASSESSMENT", AND THEN, LATER, TO "WITHDRAWAL TO THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY" LEADS US TO BELIEVE THAT EITAN AND SIILASVUO'S MEETING NEXT WEEK MAY RESULT IN SOME ADDITIONAL ISRAELI PULLBACK, BUT WE DOUBT THAT THE FINAL PLAN OF OR DATE FOR TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL WILL BE FOTHCOMING. WEIZMAN'S NOT SO VEILED COMMENTS CONCERNING THE GOOD FENCE AND THE INHABITANTS OF SOUTHERN LEBANON CONTINUE TO INDICATE THAT HE MAY ATTEMPT TO CLOSELY CONNECT THE ULTIMATE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OPEN BORDER

WITH WITHDRAWAL. PERHAPS HE WILL PROPOSE AN ARRANGE-
MENT WHEREBY UNIFIL OPERATES THE BORDER CROSSING POINTS.
WE AWAIT THE EITAN/SILASVUO MEETING WITH
CONSIDERABLE INTEREST.
LEWIS

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